



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

1 June 2020 (Videoconference)

Web Version

Minute

Present: Anne Richards, Vice-Convener of Court (Convener)
Sarah Cooper, Senate Assessor
Doreen Davidson, General Council Assessor
Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor
Jock Millican, General Council Assessor
Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member
David Law, Co-opted Member
Susan Rice, Co-opted Member
Jonathan Seckl, Senior Vice-Principal
Sarah Smith, Vice-Principal Strategic Change & Governance; and
University Secretary
Andrew Wilson, President, Students' Association

In attendance: Alan Johnston, Convener (Elect)
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal (Interim) Corporate Services
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students
Gary Jebb, Director of Estates
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal (Interim) Corporate Services
James Saville, Director of Human Resources
Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning
Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member (Elect)
Ellen MacRae, President, Students' Association (Elect)
Leigh Chalmers, Director of Legal Services (for Item 6)

1 Minutes

Papers A1, A2

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2020 and the meeting by correspondence concluded on 20 April 2020 were approved.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log

Paper A3

There were no matters arising and the action log was noted.

3 Principal's Communications

Verbal

The Principal reported on:

- the establishment of an Adaptation & Renewal Team, chaired by the Principal. Weekly reports are submitted to the University Executive, with the University Secretary sending fortnightly updates to Court;
- internal and external communications, with staff communications transparent on the likely highly significant financial impact of the pandemic on the

University and external communications concentrating on a welcoming message for prospective students and the intention to offer a hybrid model of teaching, which has generally been well received;

- the Scottish Funding Council's intention to allocate an additional £75 million of research funding to the sector, with the institutional allocations expected to be determined by use of a formula;
- the UK Government's announcement that institutions in the devolved nations would be subject to student number controls on the number of England-domiciled students they can admit, this was an unexpected announcement and further detail is awaited;
- recent Higher Education Business Community Interaction Statistics which show a large increase in the University's business community interaction score, from 15th to 4th in the UK, likely connected to City Deal and related activity; and,
- work from Nature Research that assesses the number of research outputs by leading universities against each of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and could provide useful benchmarking data in future.

The Principal invited the Deputy Secretary Strategic Planning and the Director of Finance to update the Committee on scenario planning work, with a range of internal scenarios developed alongside external scenarios developed at the request of the Scottish Funding Council to establish a sector-wide understanding. Mitigation work includes the intention to reduce net expenditure by £50m in the next academic year, with longer term mitigation work to be assessed in the autumn when the student intake is known and will target recurrent savings and further re-prioritisation of estates capital projects.

Members discussed:

- the appropriate levels of capital for the University to hold in preparation for this and any future crisis;
- receiving sight of proposals for achieving net expenditure reductions – these are expected from the autumn and over the course of the year as they develop;
- providing guidance to local areas in considering cost savings – short term and long term approaches are being scoped as part of the Adaptation & Renewal work; and,
- the health effects of the pandemic on the University community to date and prospects for testing – with data on overall infection numbers not available. The University is providing testing for NHS Scotland available to the wider community but is not testing internally at this stage.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Director of Finance's Report

Paper B

The Director of Finance reported on progress with accessing short and medium term additional funding and provided an update on the Universities Superannuation Scheme and the performance of the University's subsidiary companies in the six months to January 2020.

5 Planning Round: 2020-21 Proposals

Paper C

The proposed approach to the planning round for 2020-21 was reviewed and agreed. An initial one year expenditure budget equivalent to that of Year 2 of the 2019-20 year Court approved plan for each budget area is proposed. Initial budgets will be actively managed with the expectation that net revenue costs will need to be reduced by at least £50m over the year and student recruitment improved on the core scenario projection. It was discussed whether expenditure relating to the Student Experience Action Plan would continue as previously planned, in particular whether additional funding expected for mental health would continue in full. Student Experience Action Plan projects are being integrated and prioritised if appropriate into Adaptation and Renewal work, e.g. improving support for digital teaching. The mental health project has been agreed to proceed as a high priority and work is underway to consider whether the full initial budgeted sum is required to meet the project's objectives given expected changes in the size of the student population and entry dates.

6 Shanghai Jiao Tong University Partnership in Hainan

Paper D

An update on the potential strategic partnership with Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) to deliver medical education, medical data research and one health teaching and research focused on Hainan Island, China was reviewed.

The recommendation to proceed with the partnership with SJTU and engage in the next phase of interaction with Hainan was approved, with:

- (i) the University to engage in a 9-12 month consultancy framework agreement with the Hainan Government; and,
- (ii) authority delegated to the Principal to sign off on individual projects including the terms of agreement(s) in consultation with the Senior Vice-Principal, Vice-Principal Data Science, the Director of Finance and the Director of Legal Services.

7 People Report

Paper E

An update on people related matters being taken forward by Human Resources and other University departments was noted, including access of the UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the ongoing University & College Union pay and pensions dispute.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

8 Strategy 2030 Strategic Performance Framework Update

Paper F

Progress on work to develop a new Strategic Performance Framework for Strategy 2030 was reviewed. The extent to which student satisfaction measures would rely on National Student Survey data was discussed, noting that internal surveys are also used and that the University does not target performance in league tables but instead aims to improve student satisfaction more broadly, which would in due course be reflected in league tables and other measures. A likely increased global interest in the 'S' and 'G' aspects of Environmental, Social and Governance

measures was noted, with wider Environmental measures that go beyond carbon use under consideration.

9 Core Systems/People & Money Update

Paper G

A financial update on the People and Money System Programme (formerly known as Core Systems – the programme delivering core IT systems for HR, Finance, Payroll and Procurement) was considered. It was noted that Audit & Risk Committee had reviewed developments with the Service Excellence Programme and the People & Money System Programme at its most recent meeting, with Knowledge Strategy Committee regularly reviewing implementation and IT aspects and the Principal and University Secretary receiving weekly updates. It is anticipated that additional financial contingency will not be requested in the current academic year and work is underway to understand whether any delays can be delivered within the existing budget and contingency for 2020/21 or whether a request to access the delegated time contingency may be required.

10 Estates Committee Report

Paper H

The report was noted.

11 Investment Committee Report

Paper I

The report was noted.

12 Terms of Reference Update

Paper J

It was agreed to recommend to Court approval for updates to the Committee's Terms of Reference to:

- i) make explicit the Committee's ability to meet virtually by videoconference and teleconference; and,
- ii) to update the titles of some members to reflect changes in the composition of Court from 1 August.

13 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

14 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday, 10 September 2020, 2.30pm-5pm.